



The Right Stuff for Getting Involved in Your Child's Education

It is important to remember up front that both sensitivity and self-confidence are greater than any specific skills in parental behavior and influence. Sensitivity is critical to both involvement and closeness. The closeness of your parent-child relationship is the crucial determinant of your impact on your child's development and adjustment. Developing sensitivity enables you to evaluate your child's signals or needs, and respond to them appropriately.

You can initiate or participate in activities that help your children succeed academically. Helping your children learn can increase their success in school. Here are some steps that you can take at home, at school and in the community that make a positive difference for your children's education.

At home, you can:

- Read with your children. The ability to read well is known to be one of the most critical skills a child needs to be successful. Parents and caregivers often ask how they can get your children interested in reading, interested enough to turn off the TV and to read on their own? Years of research show that the best way is for the parent to serve as a model reader by reading to the child and by reading themselves. You can take frequent trips to the library with the child to check out books and get to know the children's librarian and children's library programs.
- Establish a daily routine. You can set a time for homework, chores and other activities; use TV wisely by limiting viewing to no more than two hours a school day; and work with your child on homework and special projects, guiding them through the steps involved and encouraging them along the way. You don't need to have in-depth knowledge of a subject, but you can be supportive of your child in working through tough spots in her or his school work.
- Make the most of bedtime. Bedtime is a terrific opportunity for you to connect with your children. For one thing, the audience is definitely captive! There are also fewer distractions. But perhaps most importantly, there is no judge standing by with a scorecard rating you on your performance. At bedtime, you can enrich your child's life merely by recounting what you did during the day. Discussing the day's events shows interest in the child and builds his or her knowledge. You may also tell or read a story. Every moment you spend and every word you say builds a relationship with your child.

In the community, you can:

- Play or coach a game or sport you like with your children on a regular basis.
- Become involved in community activities by joining a community group, place of worship, union or professional group to participate with your children in an ongoing service activity.
- Take time for family outings to places such as libraries, zoos, museums, concerts and sports events or other recreational events.
- Use your community learning center to participate in after-school and evening educational and recreational activities such as English as a Second Language, parenting, literacy, arts and music programs and crafts or computer classes. These courses are often designed for parents and your children to learn together.

At school and other childcare and child development programs, you can:

- Participate in efforts to keep your children's schools or childcare centers safe.
- Plan for the future by talking with your children and school counselors about future high school courses and postsecondary career options.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and school or class events.
- Volunteer at school. You are welcome at schools as tutors, as leaders of afternoon or evening clubs, as chaperons for field trips, social activities or athletic events, or as classroom speakers who share information about your work and the world of work and how education contributed to your expertise on the job.
- Visit your child's school or center. Parent-child breakfasts or lunches are good opportunities to informally share a meal with children and learn about their daily school experiences, successes and concerns.
- Meet your child's teachers and learn about school curriculum, and how to become involved in activities.
- Pitch in to help meet school and program needs, such as installing new playground equipment, cooking at a school picnic or painting and repairing school property.
- Join the Parent Teacher Association or other parent groups at your child's school or childcare center. At meetings, they can make your voices heard regarding your concerns and ideas for school improvement.

References

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650 J Street, Suite 215, Lincoln, NE 68508
1-800-648-4444 or 402-474-1992 <http://www.prevlink.org>

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